Your Energy Connection
Rocky Mount Public Utilities

Repair or Replace…That is the Question

These days, consumers seriously contemplate any major purchase. When major appliances are malfunctioning, making the decision to replace or repair it can be a difficult one.

Depending on which appliance needs repair and the severity of the repair that is needed, the answer may be surprising. Use the following guidelines to help make the decision a little easier:

- **Is it still under warranty?**
  - If the appliance is still covered by the manufacturer's warranty, schedule a service call with an authorized technician.
  - Since warranties vary between manufacturers, appliances and retailers, be sure to read the warranty information carefully.

- **No warranty? How old is it?**
  - The closer an appliance is to the end of its average life span, the wiser it is to replace it.
  - According to the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, the average useful life of a refrigerator is 14 years. It may not be economical to repair a refrigerator that is 13 years old. It may be more cost effective to replace it with a more energy efficient model. However, it may make sense to repair an 8 year old refrigerator since it still has several years of use remaining.

- **The 50% rule**
  - Consumer Reports recommends if the cost to repair an appliance is more than half of the price of a comparable unit, consider replacing the appliance.
  - Be sure to get a repair estimate. Keep in mind that service calls can be expensive. This cost is in addition to the cost of the repair itself.

- **Is this a 'do it yourself' job?**
  - The labor involved in repairing an appliance can be the most costly expense. Homeowners can save big by making the repairs themselves.
  - Many online resources maintain a database of owners manuals to assist in diagnosing the possible problem.
  - If making repairs at home, customers run the risk of causing additional damage and do it yourself repairs can nullify any warranties.

- **Energy Efficiency**
  - The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers says that a present day refrigerator can use up to 20% less energy than older models.
  - When considering whether to replace or repair an appliance, be sure to take into account the amount of energy to be saved by purchasing a more efficient model. This can also help reduce monthly energy costs!

- **Hidden Costs**
  - Homeowners may face costly modifications to countertops, cabinetry, wiring, and electrical outlets in order to accommodate a new appliance.
  - As standards continue to evolve, a new model may not fit into the same space as a previous model.
  - Switching from an electric appliance to a natural gas appliance will involve a conversion.

BEAT THE PEAK

"*Peak*" or "*Peak Demand*" is the greatest amount of electricity used at one time by an electric system. This occurs when a large number of customers are using appliances and HVAC at the same time. By controlling the electric load or load management, we can keep electric costs in control. Rocky Mount averages less than 10 days per month load managing.

There are several options available:

Electric Water Heater Control

Water heaters are cycled off during load management periods. **Controlling water heaters will not affect the amount of hot water available.** Customers receive **$2.00 credit** each month.

Electric Heat Strip Control

Heat strips, known as auxiliary heat, are controlled during the winter load management periods, while heat pump compressors continue to operate and provide heat.

Customers receive **$15.00 credit** each month if the temperature falls to 25 degrees or below on a non-holiday weekday.

Central Air Conditioning Total Control

Customers receive **$20.00 credit** each month for all three months during the summer season. The air conditioner's compressor is automatically turned off for the load management period. During summer month's the peak usually occurs between 2 p.m. through 6 p.m. Fans will continue to circulate the cool air in your house, but the compressor will not generate any new cool air.

There are **no installation or maintenance charges** associated with this program.

Federal Tax Credits for Energy Efficiency

Customers who are interested in making energy efficient home improvements are eligible for a 30% federal tax credit. The energy efficiency tax credit is part of the federal stimulus package passed by Congress earlier this year.

Tax credits are available at 30% of the cost or $1,500.00 in existing homes through 2010 for the following types of projects:

- **Windows**
- **Doors**
- **Insulation**
- **Roofs (metal and asphalt)**
- **HVAC**
- **Water Heaters (non-solar)**
- **Biomass Stoves**

Tax credits are also available at 30% of the cost with no upper limit through 2016 for new and existing homes for the following energy efficiency projects:

- **Geothermal Heat Pumps**
- **Solar Panels**
- **Solar Water Heaters**
- **Small Wind Energy Systems**
- **Fuel Cells**

For more information, visit **www.energystar.gov/taxcredits**

Looking to make the switch to natural gas?

Check out the Natural Gas Conversion Tool to see how much you can save by choosing natural gas.

Visit **utilities.rockymountnc.gov** for more information.